

Ayu

Ayu (sweetfish) is a prized catch and an important part of the traditional diet in Miyama. *Ayu* is valued for its sweet and succulent taste and fragrant aroma and is usually either simmered in soy and sugar (*kanroni*) or lightly salted and grilled (*shioyaki*). The small fish thrive in Miyama's Yura River, as they feed on algae that only grow in unpolluted waters.

In the past, *ayu* hatched in the upper reaches of the Yura River in autumn, migrated downstream to the warmer waters of Wakasa Bay in the Sea of Japan to mature, and then returned to the river in spring to lay their eggs. However, the damming of the river has disrupted this cycle, and the river is now artificially replenished with juvenile *ayu* every year. Fishing season is in summer when the riverbanks of Miyama are busy with enthusiasts from both near and far.

The most common method of catching *ayu* in the area is called *tomozuri*. A live *ayu* is attached to the line of a rod and released into the water as a decoy. *Ayu* are territorial and instinctually attack any intruder that might steal from their food supply. When larger *ayu* in the river swarm the fisher's decoy, several can be caught at once with a net.

Ayu fishing is strictly regulated. Prospective anglers must have a pass that can be purchased at the Miyama Town Fishery Union Office and costs 3,600 yen per day or 13,800 yen per year. The Fishery Union offers fishing classes for beginners.